

**TESTIMONY OF COLLIN O'CONNOR UDELL  
REGARDING S.B. NO. 10 (COMM.)  
AN ACT CONCERNING ~~INSURANCE~~ COVERAGE  
FOR BREAST MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING**

The story of my breast cancer diagnosis underscores the importance of the bill now before you. I am an attorney and the mother of three young children under 10. In the summer of 2009, I had an unusual symptom that was very unlike the usual lump we are all taught is the precursor to breast cancer. There was no history of breast cancer in my family. I had just had a physical two weeks before and had been pronounced healthy. I religiously had mammograms which had never disclosed any problems. Several years before I was told that I had dense breasts but never told I was at a higher risk of breast cancer because of it.

That day in the summer of 2009, I woke up with a red flush on my left breast. I went to one of the top breast surgeons in Hartford, who shall remain nameless. She did an ultrasound, which showed nothing, and she decided I had mastitis. This struck me as odd, but I took the antibiotics she offered. Two weeks later, the red flush was still there. She offered me more antibiotics, which I took, but I had a sinking feeling. I went to Dr. Google that night and started researching, and what I found frightened me.

The red flush, I learned, could potentially be the sign of inflammatory breast cancer. I had several other symptoms on the checklist, and the material I read advised that I should get an MRI to figure out what was going on. I called the doctor and spoke with the nurse, who was adamant that the doctor said I was "absolutely fine," that I should stop worrying about cancer, and that I was "not in that realm." She said that an insurance company would not cover the cost of an MRI. Somehow sensing that I was fighting for my life, I said that I absolutely needed an MRI, and that I would pay for it if necessary. Only then was I told that I could get the MRI.

The next morning, I had the MRI. I also had a mammogram which came back completely clear. However, the MRI showed a large mass in my left breast. The doctor performed a biopsy that day; it turned out not only my left breast but also a lymph node was affected. Diagnosis: Stage III breast cancer. Needless to say, with that diagnosis, the insurance company paid for the MRI.

That night, I was forced to look into the eyes of my children, then 4, 6, and 8. Because they were adopted, all I could think about was that they had already each lost their first mother, and now they were at grave risk of losing me. At Dana Farber, where I went for treatment, they told me that if I had not gotten that MRI and started treatment when I did, I would have been dead within two years.

This story has a happy ending. Miraculously, the treatment I received at Dana Farber vaporized the tumor, and I now have a greater than 90% chance of no recurrence. I plan to attend my children's high school and college graduations, dance at their

weddings, and hold my grandchildren. I am so grateful to God and to Dana Farber for literally saving my life.

However, if I had been given an MRI earlier in the process due to my dense breast tissue, I could have been diagnosed at Stage 1 or even earlier, and the anguish that wracked my family last year could have been avoided. And it is terrifying to think what would have happened if I had listened to the nurse's statement that the insurance company would not pay for the MRI and had succumbed to the considerable pressure not to have one.

Please pass this bill so that other women do not have to go through this experience. As wonderful as the pink ribbon movements are, the Komen runs that we support, and I am grateful for them all – they all mean nothing to women with dense breasts if they cannot get the MRI that would properly diagnose them in the first place.

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